

A man and a woman are shown in a close embrace in a forest at night. The man, on the right, has his eyes closed and a pained expression, with his hand resting on the woman's head. The woman, on the left, is looking down with a sad expression. They are standing in front of a large tree trunk. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting a forest setting. The title 'The Promise' is written in a white, cursive font in the upper left corner, with a red ribbon graphic integrated into the letter 'P'.

The Promise

...the tale of a man
who faces the journey
to a new land, new love,
and life threatening fears.



Welcome Reader,

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) hopes you enjoy "The Promise," the story of Eduardo and Adela, two members of the Latino community who bravely face the challenges of HIV/AIDS. While HIV/AIDS prevention and care is important in all communities, it is an especially important issue in the Latino community since HIV in this population has been increasing in the state.

"The Promise" addresses the fear and shame that keeps people from getting tested for HIV and ultimately getting treatment. Much of the fear or stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS is based on a lack of understanding. As you will learn, through education, early treatment, and the support of health agencies in your community, HIV/AIDS is a manageable condition.

We hope this story will touch you, and that you will want to share it with others. Shared knowledge is the first step to defeat the stigma against HIV/AIDS.

Sincerely,

Kathryn A. Hafford, Director
Division of Disease Prevention
Virginia Department of Health

The staff at VDH is grateful to all those who contributed to the review and creative process including members of the Metropolitan Latino AIDS Coalition and staff at KI Services, Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry, Whitman Walker Clinic, AIDS Response Effort, Inc., Virginia Organizations Responding to AIDS, Crossover Clinic, Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC, and Valley AIDS Network.

This publication was developed with 100 percent federal funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV/AIDS Prevention Cooperative Agreement # U62/CCU323468 and Health Resources and Services Administration Ryan White Part B, Grant # 07HA00009.

This publication has been approved for use by general audiences, April 2009.

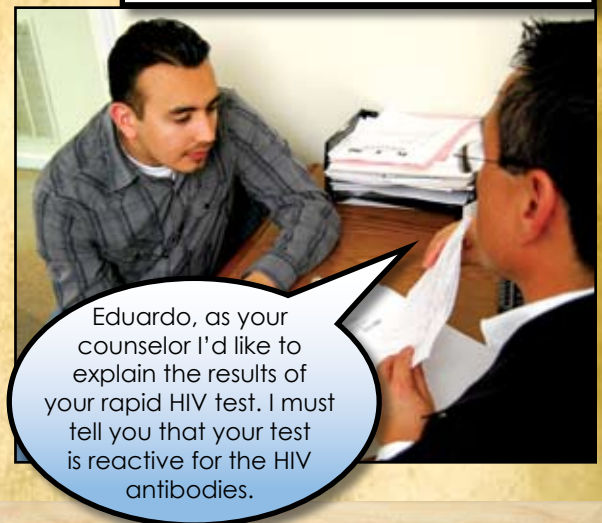
The News



Eduardo and Adela have big dreams for the future. Then one day they get news that will change everything.



Later that day at the clinic



• One in five people with HIV/AIDS do not know that they have it.

• Most people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS become infected because they do not know their partners have HIV.

• People who know their status are more likely to be careful not to spread the disease to others.

• A rapid test is done by checking for HIV antibodies through oral fluid from the mouth or a small sample of blood from the finger. The results can be given in 20 minutes.

For information about HIV/AIDS call 1-800-533-4148 or E-mail hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov

Get tested for HIV/AIDS

Three days later

The Promise



Upon hearing the bad news, Eduardo is devastated. All he thinks about is Adela.

What did the doctor tell you?

Adela... I don't know how to tell you...

I have HIV, Adela, worse yet...I probably gave it to you.

HIV? But how... It can't be true.

I have been faithful to you, but before we met things were different.

We were safe, we always used condoms.

Adela! The counselor said that there are many ways to transmit HIV. Listen to me...go to the clinic, get tested and learn more about HIV!

Get tested. Promise me!

I promise. I love you. You won't face this alone I'll be with you.

My beautiful Adela,

I write this letter to share how deep and passionate my love is for you. Before meeting you I felt lost and alone. I partied and lived recklessly. One day I prayed for a miracle, and then you came into my life like a gift.

You've made me so happy, but I fear that my careless ways have ruined the life that we planned. I pray that you don't have HIV. Please promise me that you will get tested. And I promise you that I will get treatment.

I will be devoted to you all the days of our life together.

I love you, Eduardo

For information about HIV/AIDS call 1-800-533-4148 or E-mail hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov

Only a doctor can diagnose if a person has HIV/AIDS

Two days later



As I mentioned in our last meeting, support groups are helpful and confidential. I'm glad you've decided to join one.

Miguel will talk to you about the support group and spend time with you to help you through the process.

Meanwhile, back at the home of Adela's aunt



I must help him. He can't face this alone.

Adela, forget him. He deserves what he gets! Can't you see what he did to you? What he did to us?



I have information here about HIV. Please read this.

Adela how could you do this to us. You brought this shame to our family!

RING! RING! RING!

Eduardo Calls!

Fear & Hope



Faced with fear, not to mention family anger, Eduardo and Adela seek information and outside help.



Hi Eduardo. I want you to know that your situation is manageable...you can live your life in a fairly normal manner. We'll talk more later.



He touched everything in our house. He ate here and at your cousin's house too. What are we going to do? This is a nightmare!!

Please don't panic. You're stressing me out Auntie.



(whispering) Eduardo get out of her life! You ruined her life...you brought this evil to us. Get out of our lives forever!!! (Click)

For information about HIV/AIDS call 1-800-533-4148 or E-mail hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov

For HIV/AIDS testing sites in Virginia go to www.hivtest.org

Next day at the park

The Confrontation



**No more secrets...
Adela and her best friend
confront each other.**



Hey, I had a great time last night. The guy in the band is not only good at the guitar!

Leeza, how can you have sex when you know nothing about him? There are sexual diseases that you can get.

It's nothing. I have things on my mind.

O.K., O.K. I'll find out more about those diseases.

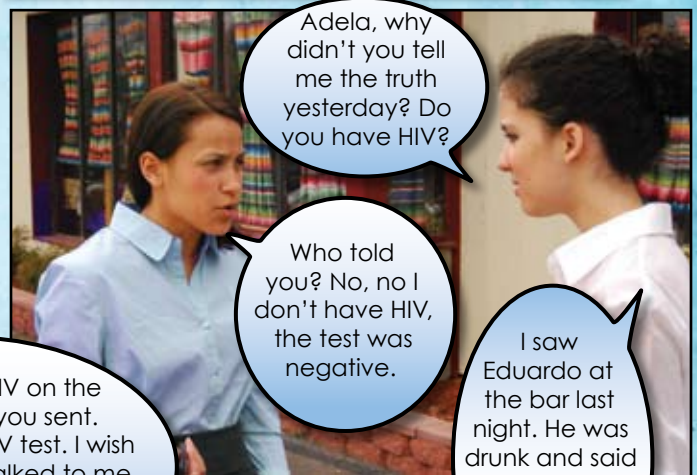
Send me a text message with some info. OK? Are you alright?



I care what happens to you.

I know all about them. The guys I go out with are O.K., they aren't sick. Chill, girl. What's wrong with you?

Next morning outside the restaurant
Leeza confronts Adela



Adela, why didn't you tell me the truth yesterday? Do you have HIV?

Who told you? No, no I don't have HIV, the test was negative.

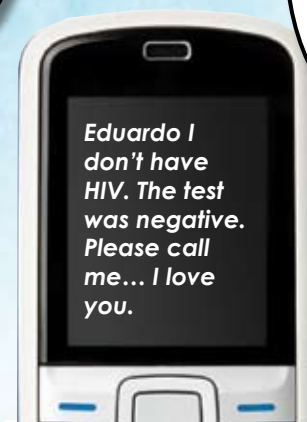
I saw Eduardo at the bar last night. He was drunk and said that he gave you HIV. Poor Eduardo has HIV.



I read about HIV on the Web site that you sent. I'm getting an HIV test. I wish someone had talked to me about HIV before, the way you did. You're the only real friend I have.

You've been a good friend too. My aunt hates Eduardo. She is scared. She is going with me to the clinic to talk with an HIV/AIDS counselor to ask questions.

Adela's text...



Eduardo I don't have HIV. The test was negative. Please call me... I love you.

For information about HIV/AIDS call 1-800-533-4148 or E-mail hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov

Not having sex is the best way to avoid HIV/AIDS

A New Day



Five months later

Eduardo and Adela are now hopeful and encouraged by all the support.



Auntie, I know you were upset. You've always been by my side no matter what happens. That is how I feel about Eduardo. What matters is that you're learning the facts about HIV/AIDS.

This isn't easy for me...I am trying to learn more about HIV/AIDS. It'll take some time. I want you to know that you have NOT shamed our family, I'm sorry I said that.

I know now that it's O.K. to share food, dishes and utensils or even the same bathroom with Eduardo.

At the clinic

Eduardo, Miguel says that you're exercising, eating healthy, and taking your medications. You look better.



Miguel taught me a lot about taking my meds. The side effects make me feel sick sometimes, but my health is better. I'm intimate with Adela and we always use condoms.

Eduardo has a good job now working with my uncle. The family is trying to help us.



I'm glad your family is overcoming the HIV stigma.

After their meeting, Eduardo and Adela run into Miguel and his partner David at the clinic.



Hi Adela, nice to meet you. Eduardo's a lucky guy. This is my partner David.

Miguel, thank you for helping Eduardo. David, you have a terrific partner. You're both invited to Eduardo's birthday party next month.



Early treatment is very important

Three weeks later

Celebrating Life!



Auntie opens her house to celebrate Eduardo's birthday. Eduardo toasts in gratitude for all the support, and most of all, to the love of his life Adela.



I hope Eduardo likes the present I got him.

He'll love it. Eduardo and I appreciate your support and love.



Did you get my text message? I was reminding you to...

Yes, I know, I got my second HIV test. I promise to get one every year. I was also tested for other sexually transmitted diseases, and the testing was free!

Doorbell Rings



Thank you everyone for sharing this day with me. You have given me more than I can repay. My promise to all of you is to stay healthy and make all of you, especially the love of my life, proud of me. SALUD!



Did Adela tell you I work part-time at the community center?

I've made some changes in my life. I'm more careful about the guys I hook up with and I protect myself.

Miguel, David, this is Adela's wonderful aunt Maria Elena.

Eduardo talks about you a lot. I feel like I know you already.



Well then, you already know that I am a fabulous cook, the best salsa dancer, and not a day over 31. (Laughter from all.)

The End

For information about HIV/AIDS call 1-800-533-4148 or E-mail hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov

Get tested for HIV/AIDS